

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-17

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 AID-20 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 FRB-02

INR-09 NSAE-00 RSC-01 TRSE-00 XMB-07 OPIC-12 CIEP-02

LAB-06 SIL-01 SAL-01 OMB-01 AGR-20 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02

L-03 NSC-10 PA-03 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 INT-08 NIC-01

RSR-01 /175 W

----- 003784

R 231625 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4003

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEGUCIGALPA 1109

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAGR ELAB PINT HO

SUBJ: GOH EXECUTION OF PEASANT RESETTLEMENT

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 0872

SUMMARY: DESPITE LOUD PRESS CAMPAIGN TO DISCREDIT IT, INA (NATIONAL AGRARIAN INSTITUTE) SEEMS TO BE OFF TO REASONABLE START IN SETTLEMENT OF PEASANTS ON " IDLE LANDS" IN TERMS OF DECREE NO. 8. IN FIRST THREE WEEKS OF ACTIVITY, INA CLAIMS TO HAVE SETTLED 575 FAMILIES. END SUMMARY.

1. THREE WEEKS AFTER NEW REGULATION TO IMPLEMENT DECREE NO. 8 (REFTEL, NOTAL), INA IS BEGINNING TO SETTLE PEASANTS ON IDLE LAND. INA DIRECTOR MARIO PONCE IN PRESS CONFERENCE MARCH 21 GAVE FOLLOWING FACTS:

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(A) INA HAS EFFECTED 10 RESETTLEMENTS OF 575 FAMILIES ON 2,776 MANZANAS. FIRST SETTLEMENT ON UNITED FRUIT PROPERTY OCCURRED MARCH 21.

(B) FOLLOWING PEASANT APPLICATIONS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED:
3 9 FOR 4,453 FAMILIES IN SOUTH; 12 FOR 398 FAMILIES IN FRANCISCO MORAZAN; 21 FOR 517 FAMILIES IN OLANCHO; 21 FOR 850 FAMILIES IN COLON; 4 FOR 20 FAMILIES IN ATLANTIDA AND AGUAN.

(C) PEASANTS FROM CHOLUTECA HAVE REJECTED POSSIBILITIES OF SETTLEMENT IN MOSQUITIA BECAUSE OF ISOLATION AND LACK OF INFRASTRUCTURE.

2. IN TALK TO EMBOFFS MARCH 21, PONCE SAID PROGRESS WAS HARD TO ACHIEVE. HE HOPES TO SETTLE 10,000 FAMILIES THIS YEAR, 5,000 IN CHOLUTECA. BUT INA STAFF IS TOO SMALL, AND HE IS NOT GETTING PROMISED COOPERATION AND LOAN OF OFFICIALS FROM MINISTRY NATURAL RESOURCES. HE SAID ANACH ALSO WAS SLUGGISH IN PROMOTING PEASANT APPLICATIONS, IN CONTRAST TO SOCIAL CHRISTIAN LIGAS CAMPESINAS WHO WERE STRONG IN SOUTH. HE IS SURPRISED AT PAUCITY OF APPLICATIONS TO DATE. PONCE SAID THERE WERE ALMOST NO SERIOUS LAND INVASIONS NOW UNDERWAY, CONTRARY TO OPPOSITION PRESS REPORTS. HE ALSO COMMENTED, HOWEVER, THAT ONLY ONE LANDOWNER HAD VOLUNTEERED LAND FOR RENTAL TO PEASANTS.

3. ANACH INACTIVITY MAY BE DUE TO ITS WEAK ORGANIZATION, WHICH IS DIFFUSE ON NATIONAL SCALE AND CONTAINS MANY POORLY EDUCATED LOCAL LEADERS. IN RECENT TALK WITH CHARGE, ANACH LEADER REYES RODRIGUEZ AFFIRMED HIS SUPPORT OF DECREE NO. 8, BUT THOUGHT THAT LARGE PERCENTAGE OF PRO- LANDLORD INA OFFICIALS WOULD SLOW DOWN PROGRAM. BUT HE SAID HE WOULD BE WELL SATISFIED IF 5,000 FAMILIES WERE SETTLED IN CHOLUTECA THIS YEAR. REYES INSISTS THAT DECREE MUST GIVE WAY TO " TRUE REFORM", BY WHICH HE MEANS WIDESPREAD DISTRIBUTION OF LAND AND ELIMINATION OF LATIFUNDIOS. (THIS IS, OF COURSE, CONCEPT EXPRESSED IN 1962 AGRARIAN REFORM LAW.)

4. OPPOSITION, INCLUDING ZUNIGA, LARGE LANDOWNERS AND UNIVERSITY- CENTERED COMMUNISTS, IS TENDENTIOUSLY ATTACK-
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ING INA AND GOVERNMENT BY RUMORS AND SUSTAINED PRESS CAMPAIGN IN DIA, CRONISTA AND PRENSA, CHARGING EXPROPRIATION OF PRIVATE PROPERTY AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF " CHAOS IN COUNTRYSIDE." TO THIS END THEY ARE ALMOST DAILY MISREPRESENTING SMALL DISPUTES AS MAJOR INVASIONS, AND HAVE EVEN PREDICTED MASS MARCHES ON TEGUCIGALPA. BOTH UNIVERSITY COMMUNISTS AND CRONISTA, FOR INSTANCE, SEEM UNITED IN TRYING TO CONVERT TIMBER- CUTTING DISPUTE AGAINST DANLI INDUSTRIALES INTO LAND INVASION AND VIOLENCE, AND CRONISTA VIRTUALLY INCITED DANLI DISSIDENTS TO INVADE ZAMORANO AGRICULTURAL SCHOOL. RECKLESSNESS OF CAMPAIGN SEEMS SELF- DEFEATING.

5. EXECUTION OF LAND DECREE WILL DOUBTLESS BE DIFFICULT AND ERRATIC DUE TO SAME TRAINED MANPOWER SHORTAGE WHICH HINDERS ALL HONDURAN PROGRAMS. EVEN EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION WILL GAIN INA NO PRAISE FROM DETRACTORS, AND ORGANIZATION WILL CONTINUE TO BE PINCHED BETWEEN LANDOWNER RESENTMENTS AND UNREALIZABLE PEASANT EXPECTATIONS.

6. NEVERTHELESS, WE CONSIDER THAT INA AND GOH MOVES HAVE SO FAR SERVED TO HOLD RURAL LAND INVASIONS TO INSIGNIFICANT LEVEL DURING PERIOD OF YEAR AGGRAVATED BY SHARP DROUGHT SUFFERING. (MOST SERIOUS CURRENT CAMPESINO DISPUTES ARE URBAN OR INDUSTRIAL.) IMPORTANT FACTORS WORKING FOR CALM IN COUNTRYSIDE ARE:

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TEGUCIGALPA 1109

(A) NEW PROCEDURES OFFER ALTERNATIVE TO FORCIBLE LAND
OCCUPATION. PEASANTS SELDOM PREVAIL IN LAND INVASIONS,
BUT TYPICALLY RESORT TO THEM AS DESPERATE SIGNAL FOR
ATTENTION OF AUTHORITIES.

(B) GENERAL LOPEZ IN PAST YEAR HAS EXTENSIVELY CHANGED
REGIONAL MILITARY AND POLICE COMMANDS. CORRUPT LOCAL
COMMANDERS, E. G. COL. PADILLA IN OLANCHO, OFTEN THEM-
SELVES CAUSED AGRARIAN DISTURBANCE.

(C) NATIONAL PEASANT ORGANIZATIONS FOR THE MOMENT SEEM
DISPOSED TO COLLABORATE WITH GOVERNMENT.

(D) EXCEPT IN DANLI TIMBER- CUTTING DISPUTE (WHICH IS
NOT ESSENTIALLY A LAND QUESTION), COMMUNISTS ARE HAVING
LITTLE SUCCESS IN AGITATING PEASANTS.
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